

FEBRUARY 3, 1972

Jet level cattle prices are the news on the Shortgrass scene.

Cows in the last stages of advanced senility are precious commodities. Hollow-horned nellies that used to go to the packers are going as pregnancy tested brood matrons, and herders who formerly had to ask their bankers for permission to play the gum machines are stirring up plenty of action.

Ever - worrying farm reporters are trying to dampen the surge by bringing up anything bad they can find. I read one report which said that once the Pan American Highway was completed, hoof and mouth disease was going to pour in here in bigger waves than a tropical storm could produce. The glum pundit said the epidemic would cost \$3 billion on a bargain plan. His account of things to come was so vivid that I'm sure the Department of Animal Health demanded that his typewriter be dipped and inspected.

Naturally the thought of hoof and mouth disease coming from the south is a frightening prospect. Counting the diseases and flies that are supposed to be coming from the north, west, and east, a merger of all the dreadnaughts is going to put stockmen under siege. The way the epidemic course sounds, the Shortgrass Country may make a better animal health laboratory than it does a broke ranchers' resort. By spring we may not tack any type of four footed disorder short of elephantiasis.

What's hard to understand is why the chief import of the United States has to be fevers and diseases. Why is it, pray tell, that what can be tracked in can't be tracked out?

You never do hear of China suffering from the Chicago flu or the St. Louis lumbago. The world is yet to know of us oval eyes giving the easterners a case of the Oklahoma encephalitis or a dose of the Kansas shingles.

We are always on the finish line of the virus race. Shortgrassers still have the Hong Kong flu to the extent that the cough drop companies are thinking of relocating in these parts. On still mornings, the coughing makes a ranch bunkhouse sound like a feedlot sick pen. The only patients who have been able to throw off the Hong Kong disorder were those who were lucky enough to catch the Caucasian pneumonia.

I'd like to see our country become a first rate power in the disease spreading battle. It's growing tiresome to see the Orient take over the camera business and the flu traffic too.

American bacteriologists have the know how to develop the germs currently being imported. You can't tell me our scientists can't outdo the ragtag operators in the eastern hemisphere. Trade balance can never be reached as long as we have to get our bugs from them.

What I really think is that the doctors over here are like French wine dealers. They just make up fancy names as an excuse to jack up their fees.

Do you know anyone who has actually seen the flu virus leaving Hong Kong? Of course you don't. For all us laymen know, the Hong Kong flu may have come from Brooklyn or Jersey City.

Menu writers are great hands to label chicken fried steaks as veal scaloppini. Lots of doctors are as smart as folk who draw up the cards at high priced chili joints. Next time somebody tells you that a doctor is a dumbhead, you challenge him to try checking out of a hospital without paying the doctor bill and see who's the dumbhead. Midwives

must have started that bit about doctors being dumb; those old sisters could be mighty mean when they wanted to.

Having hoof and mouth disease to blow in just when the market is hot would be rough. Watching a 40-cent yearling steer lie down to take a nap is a traumatic enough experience, without thinking of him catching a mortal disease.

However, we'd better enjoy the boom while it lasts. As you well know, most of them run their course in the time it takes to view a spot commercial on the radio. Three billion dollars wouldn't be impossible to grow out. That is, if the rains fall right.